



Student: **Michael Higley-Vance**

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EL7010-8

Dr. Linda Collins

Online Learning for the K-12 Students

Activity #3: Staffing the K-12 Online Course

Comments:

Faculty Use Only

Hi, Michael, you have clearly described the competencies and expertise you are expecting from an online instructor including the pedagogical approach, technology expertise, managerial experience, and social skills. You mention that not all instructors, no matter how great they are in the traditional classroom, they may or may not be appropriate or ready for the online classroom. Are the four critical skillsets you mentioned earlier in the paper something that can be taught to a highly qualified traditional classroom

instructor or are these qualities you will need the instructor to have when he or she applies for the position? A knowledgeable, supportive, and experienced administrator for online programs are a critical facet for a successful online learning environment. You have also described the importance of communication and also acknowledged the need for instructors to potentially move away from other activities to be able to focus on the online learning environment. Excellent work on this activity! Dr. Collins

Dr. Linda D. Collins 7 2.9 March 25, 2014

Staffing the K-12 Online Course

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Staffing the K-12 Online Course

Staffing responsibilities and hiring expectations for online learning environments vary greatly from that of traditional classrooms. School leaders, counselors, and district level administrators are beginning to recognize the influence and power technology has on learning (Davis & Rose, 2007; Adams, Lee, & Cortese, 2012). Virtual learning programs have greater flexibility for meeting the needs of individual learners due to the frequent availability of web-based tools and resources (Rice, 2012). As learning institutions expand education offerings to include online learning components, administrators need to recognize the importance of providing a supporting faculty, who will be able to meet the needs of such a unique and different learning environment (Adams, Lee, & Cortese, 2012; Herman, 2012). Therefore, this paper aims to address the considerations required to staff a K-12 virtual learning environment.

Instructor Competencies

Teaching in an online learning environment requires a skill set most traditional teachers do not currently possess (Vesisenaho et al., 2010; Abdous, 2011). Potential online administrators, interviewing online instructors, should consider highly qualified educators who demonstrate a thorough understanding of online teaching and learning, philosophy, and the instructional strategies necessary to motivate and successfully teach within the virtual learning environment

Dr. Linda D. Collins 3/25/14 12:21 PM

Comment [1]: Skillset is a compound word.

(Berge, 2008). Therefore, it is important educational institutions select appropriate online instructors who possess the competencies proven necessary to be successful online facilitators. Berge (2008) discussed four key competency roles an instructor should effectively demonstrate while teaching online: social role, technical role, managerial role, and pedagogical role.

Social role. Instructors must be able to create a learning environment, which supports social interactions and encourages group work, collaboration, and communication between learners and between the instructors (Berge, 2008). Theoretical opinions about social learning draw from socio-cultural and socio-constructivist approaches to learning. These learning methods emphasize a student's participation in collaborative activities, communication, and overall interactions (Vesisenaho et al., 2010; Abdous, 2011). Therefore, it is important for administrators to consider the instructors' philosophies about social roles online.

Technical role. As online education grows so does the technology in which can be used to support learning. Therefore, the online facilitator must also create a learning environment where learners feel comfortable to navigate the space and use the technology tools and Web 2.0 resources required for online learning (Berge, 2008; Rice, 2012). One of the goals of online learning is for the technology and resources to become embedded and ordinary to the student and the learning process (Berge, 2008).

Managerial role. It is important that the learner have a clear understanding of any time commitments and learning expectations before the online learning experience begins (Berg, 2008). Organization of student responsibilities, learning expectations, and student performance outcomes are necessary to ensure the institution and instructor's course expectations are clearly communicated to all students (Berge, 2008; Vesisenaho et al., 2010). With online teaching,

managing the interactions within the learning environment will be challenging and an important competency for any potential online instructor.

Pedagogical role. Berge (2008) stated that possibly the most important role of online instructors center around their responsibilities and philosophies of online learning. The instructor must practice research proven teaching strategies and embed activities proven to motivate and enhance student online learning. Instructors should use a high frequency and level of questioning to probe for student understanding and include student discussions on critical concepts and skills (Berge, 2008). Ultimately, the main role of the instructor is to model effective learning and create a learning environment, which supports social interaction while providing learning expectations and technical support necessary for students to learn.

Addressing the Misconceptions

Technology and the internet will continue to transform learning in a positive way therefore, it will be imperative that online learning be staffed with excellent instructors trained to teach in an online learning environment (Finn, Fairchild, & Fordham, 2012). There can be misleading ideas and thoughts surrounding the successful staffing of an online learning environment. These misconceptions must be identified and clarified before successfully developing the staffing process and identifying the most well prepared instructors (Davis & Rose, 2007; McCord, 2007; Abdous, 2011).

According to Davis and Rose (2007), “a knowledgeable and forward-looking administrator is critical to the success of virtual schooling” (p. 6). A common misconception about online learning is that online learning environments do not need instructional leadership support (Dave & Rose, 2007). On the contrary, online learning environments need administrators who will provide instructors with a clear and communicated vision for teaching

and learning, ensure supporting resources are available, and coordinate appropriate technical infrastructures to support a successful teaching and learning environment. Additionally, online coordinators or administrators must serve as advocates ensuring that the curriculum, finances, and technical supports required to sustain such a learning environment are as important as traditional learning resources and agendas.

Although traditional classroom teachers have content and curriculum knowledge, strong communication skills, technology experience, and a passion for learning often this is not enough to be successful in the online teaching world (Dave & Rose, 2007). Another challenge to successfully staffing an online learning environment is the misconception that any classroom teacher is qualified to teach online (Abdous, 2011). Online learning requires specific and unique pedagogy, curriculum structure, and communication (Davis & Rose, 2007), which necessitate professional development and best practices beyond the traditional classroom teacher expertise (Kircher, 2001; Davis & Rose, 2007; McCord, 2007).

Finally, the misconception that existing online learning personnel can support the needs of other school related services is damaging to the success and effectiveness of a new online program. Online learning requires a transition away from traditional educator roles to include roles and responsibilities unique to the online learning environment (McCord, 2007; Abdous, 2011). Virtual school employees should have experience as online learners or facilitators and an educational background, which supports the technical skills, teaching practices, or related services needed to meet the unique online learning environment (Kircher, 2001; Davis & Rose, 2007; McCord, 2007).

Conclusion

Knowledge and understanding is the key to successfully overcoming the challenges to effectively staffing a K-12 online learning environment. Additionally, the success and positive accomplishments of potential online instructors leading to student growth is important in the process of staffing online learning environments. Berge (2008) provided four key instructor competencies, rooted in theory and research, proven to be successful instructor roles for teaching and learning online. The most important roles and responsibilities for an instructor online is the importance an instructor places on social interactions, communicating student expectations, and technical support and learning flexibility among its use. These competencies are theory based, but also stimulate these relationships of pedagogy and responsibility by potential online instructors. A depth of knowledge construction requires overall pedagogy centered on best practices teaching and learning online such with: providing clear course requirements, prompt communication, and modeling student performance expectations. A successful and student centered learning program can be developed by focusing on these four competencies and understanding the misconceptions behind successfully staffing a K-12 online program.

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